

DECLARATION FOR A

# blue

## ECONOMIC RECOVERY



## A HEALTHY OCEAN FOR A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN PORTUGAL

This year we celebrated World Oceans Day amidst a time that will go down in history as the year the world faced the COVID-19 pandemic, an unprecedented threat to public health, which has shaken our confidence in the safety of our societies and pushed the world into a deep economic recession. The destruction of nature, the climate crisis and pandemics are the result of an economic development model based on the old economy, which depletes the planet and threatens the survival of societies. The **importance of nature for our survival and the link between nature and human health has now been demonstrated as never before.** Likewise, the economic shutdown experienced by different nations during confinement made the environmental impact of our economies clear for all to see across the planet.

Today, in preparation for economic recovery, **it is essential that Portugal does not miss the opportunity to make the ocean that defines and distinguishes us a part of the solution. The ocean is a fundamental link in this chain of life and health, and therefore must be considered in the political discourse and action of the post-pandemic economic recovery.**

**The ocean is the great regulator of the climate and supports life on our planet. It is fundamental for our survival and well-being.** But overfishing, global warming, acidification, pollution, deoxygenation, and the destruction of coastal and marine habitats call into question its ability to produce half the oxygen we breathe, absorb 90% of the excess heat from greenhouse gases, retain more than a quarter of the carbon emitted by human activities, and provide food and livelihoods to billions of people around the world.

**That is why the health of the ocean is also the basis for society's prosperity and for environmental sustainability.**

We are one of the largest maritime countries in the world, **with a unique blue natural capital at the European level**. The Portuguese Presidency of the European Council during the first half of 2021, and the economic recovery plan currently in preparation, demand that we do not waste the opportunity to **promote the health of the ocean as an essential factor for a sustainable economic recovery**. It would be tragic if recovery funds were used to support the "old economy" that depletes the ocean and fishing stocks, instead of to create the industries of the future in a circular, decarbonized economy, promoting natural capital.

Portugal cannot consider the ocean in its strategies, mention it in its speeches, but not include it in its main political and economic choices. Such options must reflect the particular geography of Portugal and the overwhelming weight of the ocean in our geopolitics, geostrategy and geoeconomics.

To this end, ANP | WWF and the Oceano Azul Foundation point out three paths to a **blue agenda** in the recovery plan for the national economy and the change that is required:

### **(1) Protecting and restoring marine life**

There is an urgent need to include the restoration of nature and marine life in the conservation paradigm; blue natural capital is a source of immense wealth which we must protect and value.

We have witnessed an accelerated degradation of fisheries. Therefore, it is essential to follow scientific recommendations and a precautionary approach, creating recovery plans for fishing stocks and co-management mechanisms for fisheries, restoring the abundance that once existed and provided the basis for the development of small coastal fishing, which is of enormous social and cultural importance in Portugal.

We have also witnessed the destruction of estuaries and coastal environments, which are fundamental for carbon sequestration and act as breeding grounds for countless species, including commercial ones; the recovery of these environments should be included in the National Energy and Climate Plan and the Roadmap for Carbon Neutrality; recovering these estuaries and marine species is a fundamental investment for the future. Establishing a network of marine protected areas to effectively protect 30 % of the Portuguese sea would be a sign of strategic leadership and qualify the country in the international ocean agenda and in the protection of its own natural capital.

It is necessary to deactivate and remove obsolete dams that impede the free flow of rivers and prevent the construction of new dams. These dams have been one cause behind the destruction of biodiversity and lack of nutrients and sediments that are essential to the wealth and security of our country's coastal areas. They have also failed to provide a decisive contribution to our energy agenda.

It is also necessary to raise the bar in the investigation and sanctions of infringements against nature and the environment, in order to discourage them and qualify us as a more modern and civilized society.

## **(2) Planning and moving towards a circular and sustainable economy**

The response to the environmental, climate and public health crises that we are experiencing requires accelerating the transition to a new model of sustainable economic development, based on scientific knowledge, innovation and the value of nature. It is clear that country's natural capital must be included under our cost-benefit analysis. At the same time, it is necessary to divest, stop subsidizing and even penalize activities that carbonize and destroy nature, including using new green taxation.

Regarding the maritime economy, the focus should be on low-impact off-shore renewable energies, green shipping, ports powered by electricity from renewable sources, algae and bivalve aquaculture and, above all, on an industrial policy for the national development of the bio-economy through marine biotechnology, adhering to the European Commission's " Sustainable Blue Economy Finance Principles ". Only in this way can we move from the current maritime economy to a truly blue economy. Thus, it makes no sense for Portugal to take a step in the wrong direction by investing in oil and gas prospecting and exploration, or deep sea mining.

## **(3) Leading the international ocean agenda**

It is essential for Portugal to strengthen its leadership position in the international ocean agenda, proactively defending solutions that ensure effective governance, the protection of natural capital and the participation of coastal communities in the elaboration of public policy. In particular, the adoption of a new treaty for the protection of biodiversity in the high seas, under negotiation at the United Nations, the United Nations Ocean Conference in Lisbon, and promoting a new global agreement, similar to the Paris Agreement for climate change, to establish new sustainable development targets for the ocean are opportunities for Portugal to lead this agenda on the international stage.

This is the time to ensure that the ocean plays a major role in the country's economic recovery and future, and that the political agenda promotes the protection and recovery of the blue natural capital, in line with the Paris Agreement, the European Green Deal, the Biodiversity Strategy and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this context, we consider the future National Strategy for the Ocean 2020-2030 should integrate the three main objectives set out above.

Since ANP/WWF and Oceano Azul Foundation have established a partnership for the next three years, joining forces to promote conservation and the sustainable use of the ocean, they have decided to promote this Joint Statement. In the coming years both organizations will develop actions covering sustainable fisheries, marine protected areas and campaigns to change behaviours and attitudes, with a view to the conservation and sustainability of the ocean, the great mark in our nation that cannot be left out of the Portuguese economic recovery programme.

**ANP | WWF**

**Oceano Azul Foundation**